



Iowa General Assembly

2007 Committee Briefings

Legislative Services Agency – Legal Services Division

<http://www.legis.state.ia.us/asp/Committees/Committee.aspx?id=214>

STATE PRISON SYSTEM PLANNING STUDY COMMITTEE

Meeting Dates: [November 14, 2007](#) | [October 10, 2007](#) | [September 19, 2007](#)

Purpose. *This compilation of briefings on legislative interim committee meetings and other meetings and topics of interest to the Iowa General Assembly, written by the Legal Services Division staff of the nonpartisan Legislative Services Agency, describes committee activities or topics. The briefings were originally distributed in the Iowa Legislative Interim Calendar and Briefing. Official minutes, reports, and other detailed information concerning the committee or topic addressed by a briefing can be obtained from the committee's Internet page listed above, from the Iowa General Assembly's Internet page at <http://www.legis.state.ia.us>, or from the agency connected with the meeting or topic described.*

STATE PRISON SYSTEM PLANNING STUDY COMMITTEE

November 14, 2007

Co-chairperson: Senator Gene Fraise

Co-chairperson: Representative Todd Taylor

Overview. The State Prison System Planning Study Committee is charged with considering the recommendations and proposals generated by the state prison system study and planning addressed by the Department and Board of Corrections. The Committee was authorized to meet for three days. The third and final meeting of the Committee was held at the State Capitol.

Department of Corrections. Mr. John Baldwin, Director, Department of Corrections (DOC), provided a status report about the study of DOC currently being conducted by the Durrant Group, Inc. He stated the study was funded in direct response to the prison escape at the Iowa State Penitentiary two years ago. He noted the study was expanded to not only include an assessment of infrastructure needs, but classification and treatment needs as well. He emphasized that the current classification system for prisoners is static, offenders are either classified as minimum, medium, or maximum risk. He further emphasized treatment programs need to be updated to place the right offender in the right program at the right time. He stated the Board of Corrections has approved the Durrant recommendations relating to additional beds and other improvements to the Iowa Correctional Institution for Women, a new Iowa State Penitentiary, additional beds at the Newton Correctional Facility, and additional community-based beds in the 1st, 3rd, 5th, and 8th Judicial Districts. He also stated the new prison beds requested at the Newton Correctional Facility will most likely be classified as minimum security beds. He estimated the appropriations to begin the Durrant infrastructure recommendations in FY 2008-2009 at \$2-\$3 million for the community-based facilities, \$3-\$3.5 million for the institutions, and \$750,000 for a project manager.

Judicial District Departments of Correctional Services. The Directors of the 1st, 3rd, 5th, and 8th Judicial District Departments of Correctional Services presented an overview of each districts infrastructure request. The Committee was informed that 98 offenders are awaiting a bed in the 1st District, 143 offenders are awaiting a bed in the 5th District, and 73 offenders are awaiting a bed in the 8th District. The Committee was also informed the 3rd District would like to establish a 12-bed intensive substance abuse treatment facility in Cherokee, Iowa.

Treasurer's Office. Ms. Stefanie Devin and Mr. Steve Larsen, Deputy Treasurers, Office of the Treasurer of State, estimated that in FY 2008-2009 the state would need to bond for approximately \$250 million to complete the proposed Durrant infrastructure improvements. Ms. Devin noted the state currently has existing debt in the amount of \$54 million. She stated that in FY 2013-2014 the annual debt service amount from the Prison Infrastructure Fund begins to decline from \$8.4 million to \$6.2 million, and ends completely in FY 2015-2016. She emphasized any authorizing legislation should be flexible, indentify the revenue source to pay off the bonds, cap the amount of proceeds for construction or indicate the amount of revenue to be pledged, and any bonding amount should be 110 percent of the amount estimated for the project.

Recommendations. The Committee adopted the following recommendations:

- Build a new Iowa State Penitentiary in Ft. Madison on one of the prison farms at a cost of approximately \$121.2 million.

- Update and expand the Iowa Correctional Institution for Women in Mitchellville by replacing older structures and adding beds, consolidating programs and services, and implementing gender specific classification and programs. The cost to update and expand the Iowa Correctional Institution for Women is approximately \$51.4 million.
- Expand the Newton Correctional Facility to reduce overcrowding and to accommodate future growth, at a cost of approximately \$25.3 million.
- Expand bed capacity for community-based corrections in the 1st, 3rd, 5th, and 8th Judicial Districts, at a cost of \$41.5 million.
- Limit the need for future prison bed growth by utilizing community-based corrections, diversion programs, substance abuse and mental health treatment, and education and training, and emphasizing a commitment to evidence-based practices to determine if programming is successful.
- Direct the Department of Corrections to further explore possible future uses of buildings remaining within the walls of the current Iowa State Penitentiary.

LSA Contacts: Joe McEniry, Legal Services, (515) 281-3189; Amanda Knief, Legal Services, (515) 281-6048

Internet Page: <http://www.legis.state.ia.us/asp/Committees/Committee.aspx?id=214>

STATE PRISON SYSTEM PLANNING STUDY COMMITTEE

October 10, 2007

Co-chairperson: Senator Gene Fraise

Co-chairperson: Representative Todd Taylor

Overview. The State Prison System Planning Study Committee is charged with considering the recommendations and proposals generated by the state prison system study and planning addressed by the Department of Corrections (DOC) and Board of Corrections. The Committee has been authorized to meet for three days. This meeting was held at the Iowa Correctional Institution for Women (ICIW) in Mitchellville. After presentations and Committee discussion the Committee toured ICIW.

Department of Corrections. Mr. John Baldwin, Director, DOC, stated there are currently 427 inmates who have been paroled or placed on work release but remain in prison until a bed becomes available at a community-based correctional facility. He noted the expansion proposed by the Board of Corrections of the 1st, 3rd, 5th, and 8th Judicial Districts is strategic in that it is designed to alleviate the backlog of inmates transitioning from prison to a community-based correctional facility. He further noted, the proposal to expand the 5th Judicial District facility is not related to the Des Moines Zoo expansion. He commented that the Durrant Group, Inc., has done an outstanding job thus far in evaluating the needs of DOC. He stated the Durrant Group, consultant for the DOC study, has focused on infrastructure, treatment, and classification.

DOC Discussion. Co-chairperson Fraise asked if the state owns the community-based correctional facilities. Mr. Baldwin replied that the state funds the construction and ongoing maintenance needs of buildings, but the district owns the buildings. Representative David Tjepkes asked why there are nine correctional institutions. Mr. Baldwin replied that in the past each institution was limited to 750 inmates in order to achieve optimal efficiency, but the 750 number is open to debate. Senator Paul McKinley asked about the reading level for offenders at ICIW. The DOC distributed a document noting the average reading level for an offender at ICIW is approximately the 10th grade. Co-chairperson Fraise inquired about the racial makeup of the offenders at ICIW. The DOC responded that approximately 22 percent of the offenders are African-American.

Durrant Group, Inc. Mr. Mike Lewis, Durrant Group, Inc., commented that it is important to adapt the architecture to the operating policy of the DOC. He further commented the operating policy should include an updated classification system, continuity of care, and be gender specific. Mr. Curtiss Pulitzer, Pulitzer-Bogard & Associates, stated gender matters when determining appropriate treatment options for offenders. He also stated there is no infirmary for sick persons at ICIW. Ms. Judy Regina-Whiteley, Durrant Group, Inc., stated 60 percent of offenders at ICIW have been diagnosed with a mental illness and 51 percent have a serious substance abuse problem.

AFSCME Comment. Mr. Dan Homan, President of American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Iowa Council 61, stated AFSCME supports the Durrant Group recommendations for ICIW. He urged that the Committee should attempt to solve the overcrowding issue at the prisons because it is a safety issue for the public, staff, and the offenders.

Committee Discussion. Co-chairperson Fraise commented that a mentoring program should be established for the time offenders leave prison. Senator McKinley stated the goals of the DOC should be to protect the public and to help transition offenders back into society. Co-chairperson Taylor stated education is a key component to reduce recidivism. Senator Tom Hancock asked what occurs if the staff is unable to handle a medical emergency. The DOC stated that a

Mitchellville ambulance service will respond at a cost of about \$1,100 per event if the emergency is beyond staff expertise.

Next Meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 14, 2007, Room 103, Supreme Court Chamber, State Capitol.

LSA Contacts: Joe McEniry, Legal Services, (515) 281-3189; Amanda Knief, Legal Services, (515) 281-6048

Internet Page: <http://www.legis.state.ia.us/asp/Committees/Committee.aspx?id=214>

STATE PRISON SYSTEM PLANNING STUDY COMMITTEE

September 19, 2007

Co-chairperson: Senator Gene Fraise

Co-chairperson: Representative Todd Taylor

Overview. The State Prison System Planning Study Committee is charged with considering the recommendations and proposals generated by the state prison system study and planning addressed by the Department of Corrections and Board of Corrections. The Committee has been authorized to meet for three days. This meeting was held at the Iowa State Penitentiary in Ft. Madison, Iowa.

Director of the Department of Corrections. Mr. John Baldwin, Director of the Department of Corrections, informed the Committee that the Board of Corrections approved option #1 of the Durrant Group's recommendations for the Iowa State Penitentiary. Option #1 includes closing the parts of the current Iowa State Penitentiary within the walls and constructing a new Iowa State Penitentiary on farm #1 in Ft. Madison. Under option #1 the clinical care unit (CCU) and the John Bennett Unit would continue to operate at existing locations. Under this option the new Iowa State Penitentiary would be an 800-bed facility on farm #1, but the number of beds actually constructed could be less than 800. The board also recommended expanding the Iowa Correctional Institution for Women at Mitchellville and expanding community-based correctional facilities in the 1st, 3rd, 5th, and 8th Districts.

Representative Wayne Ford asked about Iowa's #1 ranking for the highest incarceration rate of African-Americans. Mr. Baldwin replied that data is now available to help officials in determining whether offenders are serving the same amount of time for the same offense. He also emphasized that expanding early childhood education and increasing the use of community-based corrections are essential strategies to reduce Iowa's incarceration rate of African-Americans.

AFSCME Comment. Mr. Dan Homan, President of AFSCME Iowa Council 61, stated staffing levels need to be increased at the Iowa State Penitentiary to prevent future escapes. AFSCME is opposed to the Board of Correction's recommendation adopting the Durrant Group's option #1. He emphasized it is shortsighted to close the current cell houses within the walls of the Iowa State Penitentiary because more bed space is needed.

Representative Steve Lukan asked if it is helpful to use dogs in a prison. Mr. Homan responded that dogs have a purpose in prison and he is not opposed to using dogs. However, he emphasized dogs are incapable of finding shanks and other improvised weapons and probably can't be used at the Iowa Correctional Institution for Women. Co-chairperson Fraise commented that dogs have a place in a prison setting especially when it comes to controlling a group of inmates or if an inmate has a weapon. Representative Lukan also asked if it was a good idea to hire a security director at the Department of Corrections. Mr. Homan replied that a security director would make security procedures more consistent throughout the department.

Representative David Tjepkes asked if constructing a new prison in Ft. Madison is an efficient use of taxpayer dollars. Mr. Homan replied that we have institutions spread throughout the state and we cannot place everything in the Des Moines area.

Tour. The persons attending the meeting were split into four tour groups. Co-chairperson Taylor commented that it is important to discuss the prison with the frontline personnel who operate the prison on a day-to-day basis. The tour consisted of a visit to and discussions about the CCU, the Industries Building, the kitchen, and the cell houses within the walls of the prison. The Industries Building, the kitchen, and the cell houses are all slated for closure under option #1 adopted by the Board of Corrections. The tour concluded with a visit to farm #1 to view the proposed construction site of the new Iowa State Penitentiary. Mr. Brad Hier, Public Service Executive with the Department of Corrections, stated the proposed site consists of 40 acres and currently has electricity, sewer, and water hookups.

LSA Contacts: Joe McEniry, Legal Services, (515) 281-3189; Amanda Knief, Legal Services, (515) 281-6048

Internet Page: <http://www.legis.state.ia.us/asp/Committees/Committee.aspx?id=214>